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LETTER DATED 24 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement on Kosovo issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group, meeting together with the Foreign Ministers of Canada and Japan in London on 12 June 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John WESTON
Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland to
the United Nations

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Annex

Statement on Kosovo issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group in London on 12 June 1998

1. Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group, meeting together with the Foreign Ministers of Canada and Japan, turned from their discussion of the recent nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan to address the serious deterioration of the situation in Kosovo, which represents a significant threat to regional security and peace.

2. Ministers repeated that no solution to the problems of Kosovo can be found through violence. The parties must take urgent steps to end the violence and bring about a political solution to the crisis.

3. Security forces have again intervened indiscriminately, causing many civilian casualties and forcing tens of thousands of inhabitants to flee their homes. Ministers condemned Belgrade's massive and disproportionate use of force, which has resulted in widespread destruction and the deliberate displacement of large numbers of people. They also condemned the failure by Belgrade to take concrete steps to reduce tensions. Ministers therefore decided to put to the authorities in Belgrade a set of essential points on which they required immediate action to prevent any further deterioration in the situation. These cover concrete measures:

- To cease all action by the security forces affecting the civilian population and order the withdrawal of security units used for civilian repression;

- To enable effective and continuous international monitoring in Kosovo and allow unimpeded access for monitors;

- To facilitate, in agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the full return to their homes of refugees and displaced persons and to allow free and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations and supplies to Kosovo;

- To make rapid progress in the dialogue with the Kosovo Albanian leadership.

4. Ministers expect the Kosovo Albanian leadership to make clear its rejection of violence and acts of terrorism. It is essential that Kosovo Albanian extremists refrain from further violent attacks. A political dialogue is unlikely to take root if violence continues to be espoused by members of the Kosovo Albanian community. Our Governments will work with others, including those in the region, to ensure that all those seeking to escalate the crisis through violence are denied financial and material support. Ministers also expressed support for those in the Kosovo Albanian leadership who are committed to peaceful dialogue.

5. Ministers insist that the fighting stop and effective dialogue, capable of producing meaningful early results, resume quickly. Belgrade and the Kosovo Albanian leadership must agree to a continuous dialogue to discuss confidence-building measures and to find a political solution to the problems of Kosovo, with international involvement. There must be a clear timetable for rapid progress, and President Milosevic, as President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has a special responsibility to ensure that steps are taken to achieve a political solution.

6. Ministers expect that Belgrade will take the steps set out in paragraph 3 above immediately. They welcomed the invitation by President Yeltsin to President Milosevic to a meeting on 16 June. They stressed the importance of President Milosevic taking advantage of that meeting to announce progress on the above steps and to commit Belgrade to their implementation in full. If the steps set out in paragraph 3 are not taken without delay, there will be moves to adopt further measures to halt the violence and protect the civilian population, including those that may require the authorization of a Security Council resolution.

7. In the meantime, faced with the growing crisis in Kosovo, Ministers also:

- Urged the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to undertake a rapid and thorough investigation of any possible violations of international humanitarian law in Kosovo;

- Agreed to give active support to UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations dealing with the humanitarian cost of the crisis in the region;

- Undertook to accelerate efforts to assist neighbouring countries to improve their security and to cope with the humanitarian burden imposed upon them.

8. The Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America confirmed their decision to implement the ban on new investment in Serbia and to freeze funds held abroad by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian Governments, and agreed to take steps to ban flights by Yugoslav carriers between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and their countries. Japan supported that approach and agreed to consider similar action. The Russian Federation does not associate itself with those measures.

9. Ministers again underlined the importance of the early launching of the mission of the Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in order to establish a dialogue across the full range of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's relations with OSCE, and of the return of the long-term OSCE missions.

10. Ministers will review these decisions in the light of developments.